

# *City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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## **MEMORANDUM**

DATE: JUNE 5, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: JOEL MARCUSON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 5 – CORRIDOR C UPDATE

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**ISSUE:** Update on the status of the Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Assessment for Corridor C (Beauregard/Van Dorn Transitway).

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Transportation Commission receive the update.

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### **Background**

The City's Transportation Master Plan, adopted in 2008, identifies three corridors of dedicated, congestion-free, rights-of-way for future transit services. These three transitways serve to connect existing and future development areas that have the highest densities of land use and major activity, employment centers, and connectivity to the regional transit network. They include: Corridor A (North-South/Route 1), Corridor B (Duke Street) and Corridor C (Beauregard/Van Dorn). Corridor C is a high priority for implementation due to the current planning and development efforts that are occurring along the corridor, including the BRAC-133 development and the Beauregard Corridor redevelopment.

The proposed transit corridors and services have been developed to a concept level. The City began the Transitway Corridors Feasibility Study in the Fall 2010. Based on public input, a recommendation was made by the project advisory group, also known as the High Capacity Transit Corridor Work Group (CWG) for Corridor C in Spring 2011. CWG's recommendation was for the operation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in dedicated lanes until such time as streetcar becomes feasible and can be implemented. City Council adopted this recommendation on September 17, 2011, adding that the alignment should be optimized to better serve the Northern Virginia Community College.

Per the alignment recommended by the CWG, the Van Dorn Metrorail station would serve as the transitway's southern terminus. At that end, the corridor could coordinate and integrate with transit service provided by Fairfax County to Kingstowne and points south. The transitway would traverse north along Van Dorn Street, serving the Landmark Mall area (where it would integrate with Corridor B – the east-west transitway along Duke Street). The transitway would turn west along Sanger Avenue, then north along Beauregard Street where it would provide access to the Mark Center area with its new BRAC-133 complex. From the Mark Center, two branches are proposed – one would access the I-395 HOV lanes from Seminary Road and

continue directly to the Pentagon. The second branch would continue north on Beauregard Street to serve the Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC), and continue through Arlington County on Walter Reed Drive and Arlington Mill Drive to serve the Shirlington transit center. From Shirlington, the second branch would access the I-395 HOV lanes and continue to the Pentagon.

At a future date, the transitway could be converted to a streetcar operation in dedicated lanes that would connect to a future Columbia Pike streetcar in Arlington. A conceptual design and planning level cost estimate for the CWG recommended BRT alternative for Corridor C has been completed.

### **Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Assessment**

The City anticipates seeking federal funding for construction of the Beauregard/Van Dorn Transitway. The City will follow the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) process for the planning and development of federally funded transit projects, which includes meeting the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The new federal transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21), no longer requires the completion of an Alternatives Analysis (AA) to be eligible for the federal Small Starts/New Starts grant program. Before the adoption of MAP-21, the City received a \$1 million grant to complete an AA. After consultation with FTA, staff decided to move forward with the AA because (1) limited new guidance has been published and (2) the AA is an established process that will help the City further refine the alignment with public input.

The AA will evaluate several alternatives, including a No Build Alternative and a Build Alternative based on the CWG's recommended alignment. The AA will provide information to local officials on the benefits, costs, and impacts of the alternatives, so that a locally preferred alternative can be identified.

The FTA has determined that the appropriate NEPA Class of Action for this project will be an Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA process will evaluate potential transportation, social, economic, and environmental effects. The EA will also analyze impacts that could occur during the construction period and longer-term impacts resulting from the project, and will identify mitigation measures to alleviate potential impacts, as appropriate.

### **Request for Proposals and Schedule**

The City issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a consultant to conduct the AA/EA on April 26<sup>th</sup>, with proposals due on May 30<sup>th</sup>. The City anticipates awarding the contract by the end of July. The City's goal is to complete the AA/EA within 18-20 months.

The AA/EA process will include the establishment of an Interagency Technical Working Committee (to include representatives from federal, state, and local jurisdictions), as well as a Policy Advisory Group (to include representatives from FTA, elected officials, and other key stakeholders). Ongoing stakeholder and community outreach is anticipated to begin in the Winter and will include several public meetings, a regularly updated website, development of a newsletter and other outreach materials, and project briefings for local commissions and committees, as well as City Council.